

## Women's Studies at Lehigh

By Shelly Harris

Why does Lehigh University need a Women's Studies department? This question may be one that you've heard being asked around campus in a sarcastic manner, or maybe you genuinely want to know. Well first, I will tell you that Lehigh currently does not have a Women's Studies *department*. What we have now is a *program*. I am not saying this in a snobby, stuck-up sort of way because the Women's Studies program has been a wonderful source of comfort and acceptance for me over my four years at Lehigh. I bring up the fact that it is merely a *program* because I think it deserves so much more than just that.

We will back up a little here and I will tell you a little bit about my experiences with the Women's Studies program. I myself am a Women's Studies major. In fact, this spring, I will be one of the two people to graduate with the first ever degree in Women's Studies in the entire history of Lehigh University. That being said, it is a small group. The minor has existed for a while and because of that, there are many classes that are cross-listed in Women's Studies and \_\_\_\_\_. These classes are so rich in content because they offer multiple perspectives and subject matters. Now that we finally have a major, hopefully these types of courses will grow and expand to reach all subject matters. The Women's Studies courses I have taken here have been inspiring, fun, and have taught me so much about life. The Women's Studies program has given so much to me over these past 4 years and I feel honored to be serving in this historic position.

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## Vegan Brownies!



### Ingredients:

- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 cups white sugar
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt. Pour in water, vegetable oil and vanilla; mix until well blended. Spread evenly in a 9x13 inch baking pan.
3. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes in the preheated oven, until the top is no longer shiny. Let cool for at least 10 minutes before cutting into squares.

## Meet the Staff

Rita Jones, Ph.D.  
Director

Michelle Issadore, M.Ed.  
Assistant Director

Noël K. Panebianco  
Office Coordinator

Alisha Gonzales '09—Body Empowerment Alliance Co-Coordinator

Andrea Espinoza '11 – Founder of *Libra de Feminae*

Christine Tucker—Graduate Student, *Origyns* Editor

Dianna Hank '10 – *Women's Word* Editor, *Origyns* Co-Editor

Elisa Pennetti '10 – Body Empowerment Alliance Co-Coordinator

Greg Martin '11 – Employee

Heather Mushock '10 – Staff member

Kateland Aller '09 – Staff member

Kristina Fennelly—Graduate Volunteer

Nicole Perry '09 – Break The Silence Member

Shelly Harris '09—Break The Silence Member, Intern, Vagina Monologues Co-Coordinator

Tara Stephenson—Volunteer

# Five Mothers

by Andrea Espinoza

I have five mothers. Yes, five. I know that everyone says that a person only has one mother, and I love my natural mother dearly. But at Lehigh, I have five. They are as different from each other as you could possibly imagine. While all of them are passionate activists who believe in equal treatment for every single person on this campus, their personalities are completely unlike one another.

One mother is a mile-a-minute talker who is not afraid to disagree with the status quo. She is brave, fiercely loyal to her friends, and is not afraid to start a conversation on an uncomfortable topic. She reminds me on a daily basis that, in order to effect change, uncomfortable conversations have to happen. Period.

Another mother is the exact opposite of her. She is quiet, mysterious, and doesn't talk much. Yet, when she does speak, her kindness and her wisdom impart every part of her speech and you take her words that much more seriously. Basically, when she speaks, everyone listens.

My third mother is a fun-loving, bohemian woman who has seen the world's ugliness both at home and beyond and yet still is not afraid to see the goodness in life. She is a total sweetheart who always lets me rant and rave about what is going on in my life. Since we are both from the same city, I feel as though my favorite aspects of the city were wrapped in her and she was put here to remind me of home. When she is around, I am home.

The fourth mother is a woman who taught me how to find my inner moan. She is a woman who makes me see the flip-side of everything in life. She has taught me to never judge a book by its cover. There are times when she is quiet, and then there are times that she can burst out with a quirky remark, or her infectious laughter will just make everyone start laughing and then wonder, "What are we laughing about?" With her, I have learned to be myself. My quirky, loud self.

My last (but definitely not least) mother is a woman who has taught me that being a woman is incredibly important. We are literally half of the population of the world. She has allowed me to come into her office and start screaming about feminist readings that I don't agree with. She allowed me to take a chance upon a new venture. She allowed me to be myself. In my eyes, she is a true Wonder Woman, because she is made of invisible steel that no one can break. I hope to eventually have even just a tiny little bit of that.

Those are my five mothers. Sure, they come from all walks of life. However, I can honestly say that each one of them has changed my life forever. Because of them, I will not be afraid to stand up for what I believe is right, regardless of the outcome. I will not hesitate to be myself. I will not hesitate to go left when others go right. I hope they are proud of me because I know that I am extremely proud to have learned so much from them.



## Women's Studies con't from p. 1

Ok, so now it's time for my soap box moment. The Women's Studies program *should* have its own department. It's time we give funding to programs and studies that are helping to make Lehigh a better, more comfortable place for everyone. I am not saying that the other departments are not important, just that we should treat all studies as equal. There is no reason why Women's Studies should not receive the same funding and respect as other departments. This is a call to students to sign up as Women's Studies majors. If you are thinking about it, if the thought has entered your mind: Do it! I promise you will not be disappointed. Let's show Lehigh that a Women's Studies department is something that we want and need to have! Help make a Women's Studies department at Lehigh!

# Lehigh ♥s Female Orgasm

By Christine Tucker



On April 7, 2009, sex and relationship educators Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot brought the female orgasm to Lehigh. In all fairness, it might have been here all along, but they certainly made it come out of hiding. Miller and Solot's program, "I ♥ Female Orgasm," merged humor, audience participation, and multimedia to stimulate conversation about female sexuality and pleasure. The title might have surprised those who saw students, faculty, and staff wearing promotional buttons and t-shirts in the weeks leading up to the event. But what better way to get people thinking about a rarely-discussed topic (read: healthy female sexuality) than to shock them with the words "female" and "orgasm" in close proximity?

Miller and Solot have presented over 400 programs across the country and "Female Orgasm" is one of the most praised. Let's face it: sex is a topic students want to talk about and sex education programs in high schools—when students are lucky enough to have them at all—usually follow a (boring) script that leaves students with questions that they are too uncomfortable to ask or that educators are too uncomfortable to answer. Female sexuality, especially, is glossed over as simply reproductive. As Miller and Solot pointed out, we all remember seeing images of fallopian tubes, but the clitoris is notably absent from many sex ed class illustrations of female genitalia. Whether partnered or masturbatory, female orgasm and pleasure is usually ignored in favor of discussions about contraception and STIs. Miller and Solot righted that wrong by discussing different types of orgasms, how to have an orgasm, and misconceptions about masturbation and intercourse. Above all, "I ♥ Female Orgasm" emphasized that communication, empowerment, and self-love should accompany every sexual encounter. To experience or give healthy sexual pleasure, everyone must be comfortable with his/her body and desire. Solot, for example, attributes her survival of breast cancer to her comfort with her own body: she found a lump while touching her own breast at age 26. Miller and Solot created a great, safe space in which audience members could ask questions or simply listen. From the crowd's response, the pair seems to have hit the spot.



# Lehigh's Public Health Week Speaker Lisa Russell Brings LOVE, LABOR, LOSS to Campus

By Nikki Perry

March 23, 2009 marked the first annual Public Health Week ever held on Lehigh's campus. The intense 5-day event schedule shared its debut glory with the campus veteran: Healthy Body Image Week. While the week was admittedly slightly overbooked, students still came out to show their support and interest at many of the planned events.

Wednesday the 25th showcased the documentary screening of LOVE, LABOR, LOSS with commentary and discussion from the director, Lisa Russell. The turnout was humble in size, but the program, itself, was amazingly impactful.

Lisa guided the audience through her experiences in the Congo, step by step, using documentary clips and bits of interspersed first-hand explanations as her vehicle. The film snippets tugged at viewers' heartstrings as we were lead through the tales of five women's lives who were suffering from the debilitating condition known as obstetric fistula. While the documentary was wonderfully directed and informative, it was Lisa's passion about her work and devotion to helping women from around the world that truly caught the attention of the students and faculty in attendance.

Lisa has recently released her newest documentary featuring the subject of unsafe abortions in the countries of central Africa. It debuted April 7<sup>th</sup> online at <http://www.notyetrain.org> and is every bit as engaging and intriguing as LOVE, LABOR, LOSS. In addition to this new short-film, Lisa has been working on another documentary based right here in the US. This film mainly concentrates on Brooklyn and other inner-city areas. While this new film seems to stray quite a bit from Ms. Russell's female empowerment advocacy work, the motivated director explained to us that the health and safety of women everywhere depends on the overall level of violence toleration right here at home.

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## How Safe Are Your Cosmetics, Really?

By Kateland Aller

A recent industry-wide trend in the marketplace has seen consumers paying more attention to words such as "natural" and "organic." In everything from clothing to food, we see everyday product marketing couched in this terminology of "purity" — indicating better health for our bodies and our environment. However, consumers must be aware that just because a product flaunts images of green leaves and the word "natural" on its packaging doesn't mean that the ingredients it's made of are healthy or even safe at all.

It may surprise some that cosmetic products and ingredients are not subject to FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) premarket approval authority. On the FDA's own website, it is explained that it is the cosmetic firms, themselves, who are responsible for substantiating the safety of their products and ingredients before marketing. How can you trust the industry, whose goal is to maximize its profits, to keep your best health interests in mind? Does the FDA really think the cosmetics industry is going to keep products safe out of good faith and sense of responsibility to us, the consumers? Apparently so. Even if a product is discovered to be "hazardous," the FDA can only suggest a recall, but not enforce it: "Recalls of cosmetics are voluntary actions taken by manufactures or distributors to remove from the marketplace products that represent a hazard."

Without effective laws regulating the use of dangerous ingredients in the products we put on our face, our nails, our skin, in our hair, and so on, it is up to us, the consumers, to protect ourselves from products that pose a threat to our health.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to use the power of public information to protect public health and the environment. Its website ([www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)) specializes in providing useful resources to consumers. One such resource is called the SKIN DEEP Cosmetic Safety Database (<http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/>), which has compiled information on thousands of beauty products and brands. For each specific product, it provides a rating (on a scale from 1-10) associated with the hazardous nature of its ingredients and the related health risks they pose. You might be shocked by what you learn; that \$20.00 bottle of fancy "organic" face lotion you've gotten so partial to might be linked to cancer and could actually be more than twice as dangerous as the drug-store brand.

Luckily, someone is giving us the information we need to keep ourselves safe. But then the question becomes should it really be our responsibility? If our government has the information about ingredients that are hazardous to our health, why hasn't it created any legislation or policies to regulate or ban them?



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### ACROSS

4. Director of the Women's Center
8. Cultural icon of the United States, representing the American women who worked in war factories during World War II
10. Consent is \_\_\_\_\_
11. This year's spotlight for The Vagina Monologues (abbrev.)
12. "The magazine for women with something to get off their chests"
14. Book club run out of the Women's Center
15. A social and political movement which points to the existence of considerable common ground between environmentalism and feminism
16. Creator of The Vagina Monologues
17. Program that addresses the issue of violence against women by providing a vehicle for the women to express their emotions by decorating a shirt
18. Betty Friedan's book that criticized the idea that women could only find fulfillment through childrearing and homemaking

### DOWN

1. The group of students who volunteer their time to address the issue of sexual violence on campus
2. An internationally held march and rally intended as a protest and direct action against rape and other forms of violence against women, originated by the feminist movement
3. First year undergraduate women were admitted into Lehigh University
5. The literary magazine of the Women's Center consisting of essays, poetry, short stories, and artwork that focuses on topics concerning feminism or gender
6. National Women's History Month is this month
7. A student group that focuses on body image issues, eating disorders, and self-esteem (abbrev.)
9. One of the 1st graduating Women's Studies majors
13. Vagina Friendly Men (and Women)

# Have a Great Summer!

*...see you next fall??*

Apply for an internship at the Women's Center!



Apply for work/  
study at the Women's Center!

Volunteer at the Women's Center!



Take Women's Studies 291: Sexual Violence



Try out for the Vagina Monologues

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